WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN OF NEBRASKA

Thrice an Aspirant to Presidential Honors, He Has Proved Himself to Be a Citizen of Whom the American Public May be Proud.

WHEN the Democratic national convention of 1896 opened at Chicago it was a fact known to all that party sentiment had changed; that it had drifted into new channels and was undergoing a sort of political regeneration. It was also apparent that most of those who had been directing the policy of the party had become the exponents of the minority and that those who were responsible for the change were men who had never been active supporters of the financial theories which were so characteristic a feature of the existing administration.

At that time it was quite evident that the bulk of the party was prepared to break away from the leadership of the only Democrat who had sat in the presidential chair since the days of James Buchanan. At the early sessions of the convention it was made manifest that the breach between the free coinage of silver advocates and the single gold standard people was complete and beyond compromise. From the first it was clear that the "sixteen to one" movement dominated the convention, and it seemed but logical that Congressman Richard P. Bland of Missouri, its author and ready sponsor on all occasions, should receive the nomination for president.

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Everything pointed that way. Mr. Bland, known popularly and affectionately as "Silver Dick," the warhorse of the free silver coinage movement, was old and in feeble health, but his popularity seemed to be invincible. His genial disposition and stanch character had made him hosts of friends in all parts of the country, and his earnest teaching had resulted in an army of converts. His friends and supporters were in apparent possession of the field, and their enthusiasm and determination to win were a source of great discomfort to the representatives of the gold wing of the party.

The opening preliminaries were conducted in the dignified and rather perfunctory manner of great national conventions. The claims of contesting delegations were looked into, and everything passed off serenely until the adoption of the platform was reached. It was at the attempt of the gold standard men to introduce a plank committed to their doctrine that the premier sensation of the campaign of 1896 took shape. In the thick of the din and confusion which followed the reading of the gold resolution a sturdy figure elbowed its way to the platform, mounted it with a bound and stood revealed to the turbulent assemblage.

"Who is he?" asked a member of the New York delegation of his right hand neighbor.

"Looks like Bill Bryan—Boy Orator of the Platte, you know."

"No; I don't know. Is he any good?"

"Well, yes—rather. Heard him once in Lincoln."

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Now the babel ceased, and a voice rose strong and vibrant, a voice that from its first note penetrated to every part of the great hall and was heard distinctly by every one of the 15,000 persons present. The discordant rumble of speech which the gavel of the bewildered chairman was powerless to control was hushed instantly by the magic of a voice. It was the most telling bit of political oratory heard since the "plumed knight" burst of eloquence from the gifted Robert Ingersoll. It was a brief and impassioned appeal for bimetallism and an exalted plea for the acceptance of the new Democratic financial teaching. There was not a man in the vast throng who did not feel a thrill when the man from Nebraska uttered his oft quoted "cross of gold and crown of thorns" metaphor. There was a wild whirlwind of applause from friend and foe, and the name of William Jennings Bryan was on every tongue.

No further thought of "Silver Dick!" No further chance for the insertion of a gold plank in the platform! Bryan and silver! This became at once the motive of the convention, and all else was deemed irrelevant. The jubilant majority hastened to announce him as its candidate, and in an incredibly short time the whole world was clamoring to be told all that was known about William Jennings Bryan.

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It was a simple story, but well worth the telling. He was comparatively a young man, but one year older than the constitution of the United States demands that a chief magistrate shall be. Never before had either great political party chosen for its standard bearer so young a man, and never before had a man who lived west of the Mississippi river received the nomination. It was true that some of his speeches in the lower house of congress had given him something of a reputation as an orator, but his fame had been confined to the capitol and to the narrow limits of his own state. He was practically unknown to the great American public, and especially so to the eastern section of it. It was the first case on record of a nominee who had won the distinction by a single oratorical effort, and the entire country was on the qui vive to see how the young man from Nebraska was going to acquit himself.

He was a disappointment only to those who had failed to appreciate his capability. Those who had done so were amazed at the facility he developed. He entered into the campaign with a zest and thoroughness which were a revelation even to the most experienced campaigner. His political foes soon realized that there was pitted against them no tyro in the business of president making and that usual methods must be abandoned and new systems of defense planned. The opposition was compelled to call all its reserves into service at the very beginning of the campaign, so farreaching had been the influence of the remarkable convention oratory of the Nebraska man.

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Nor did Mr. Bryan do anything during that memorable campaign to dim the impression created by his famous speech. He realized acutely that the American public did not know him, and he resolved that he would do his part in bringing about a closer acquaintance. Since manifestly it was not possible for this more intimate relationship to be cultivated as long as he remained in his remote Nebraska home, he went out among the people and showed them what manner of man he was. He injected into the campaign a personal quality that had lapsed since the days of the early presidents. It was spoken of as a whirlwind campaign, and such it was, but in spite of the velocity with which it was conducted and the immensity of the area covered Mr. Bryan succeeded in making a marvelous impression.

In that unique campaign the Democratic nominee traveled more than 18,000 miles and delivered upward of 2,000 speeches. As a political spellbinder he has never had an equal. His eloquence in that campaign was so far beyond the oratory of the political spellbinder that even those who were not in sympathy with his financial and economic views were fascinated by his personality and the music of his utterance. Realizing, as he must have done, that his gift of speech was golden and his greatest asset, he made the most of it. His invasion of what he termed jocosely "the enemy's country" was nothing less than a personal triumph for the Nebraska orator. The effort in itself was phenomenal. In a single day while he was making a whirlwind tour of New York state he delivered forty-nine addresses. Thirty-five speeches, big and little, were made by him on several consecutive days, and it was no unusual thing for him to address twenty different audiences at twenty different places, within twenty hours. It was the most heroic test of physical and mental endurance ever attempted by a candidate for the presidency.

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Mr. Bryan did not win the presidency, but it would be wide of the mark to term him a loser. He was indefinitely a gainer and a winner in all respects save one. The Bryan who went down to defeat with Arthur Sewall of Maine and Thomas E. Watson of Georgia was a greater and more competent citizen than the young man whose oratory electrified the Chicago convention. He had proved himself to be a man of whom the American people well might be proud, and that, too, without the necessity of subscribing to a single tenet of his political creed. "Fanatic" and "visionary" are but the shibboleth of political controversy. They have served their purpose and may now carefully be put away in lavender.

In 1900 the Democrats convened at Kansas City and once again made Mr. Bryan their candidate, this time by acclamation. In the four years which had passed the Nebraska man had suffered neither political eclipse nor loss of prestige. His leadership was so indisputable that his opponents within the party did not think it worth while to interfere with his prospects at Kansas City. Later, however, a minority representing those who were not in sympathy with his financial views went to Indianapolis and formulated what is known in political history as the "gold ticket."

At the time of his second nomination Mr. Bryan was still an ardent champion of free silver. Believing that his warm advocacy of that doctrine was the only thing that stood between him and the presidency, many of his admirers tried to persuade him to abandon it or at least to relegate it to a less conspicuous place in his affections. It is another evidence of the courageous uprightness of the Nebraska man that he declined absolutely to do violence to his honest convictions; that he refused to accept the nomination without a plain declaration that his faith in free silver was still unshaken.

Although new issues had appeared and the financial question had become less insistent, Mr. Bryan saw to it that the silver plank was made a prominent feature of the Kansas City platform. The war with Spain and the subsequent acquisition of the Philippines had made the money question less prominent, but Mr. Bryan did not take advantage of that fact to modify his theory. A single intimation, however slight, that he had readjusted his financial views would have united his party and made him its unchallenged leader, but as long as he was convinced of the truth of his contention he was ready to accept the consequences, even the defeat which came at the election.

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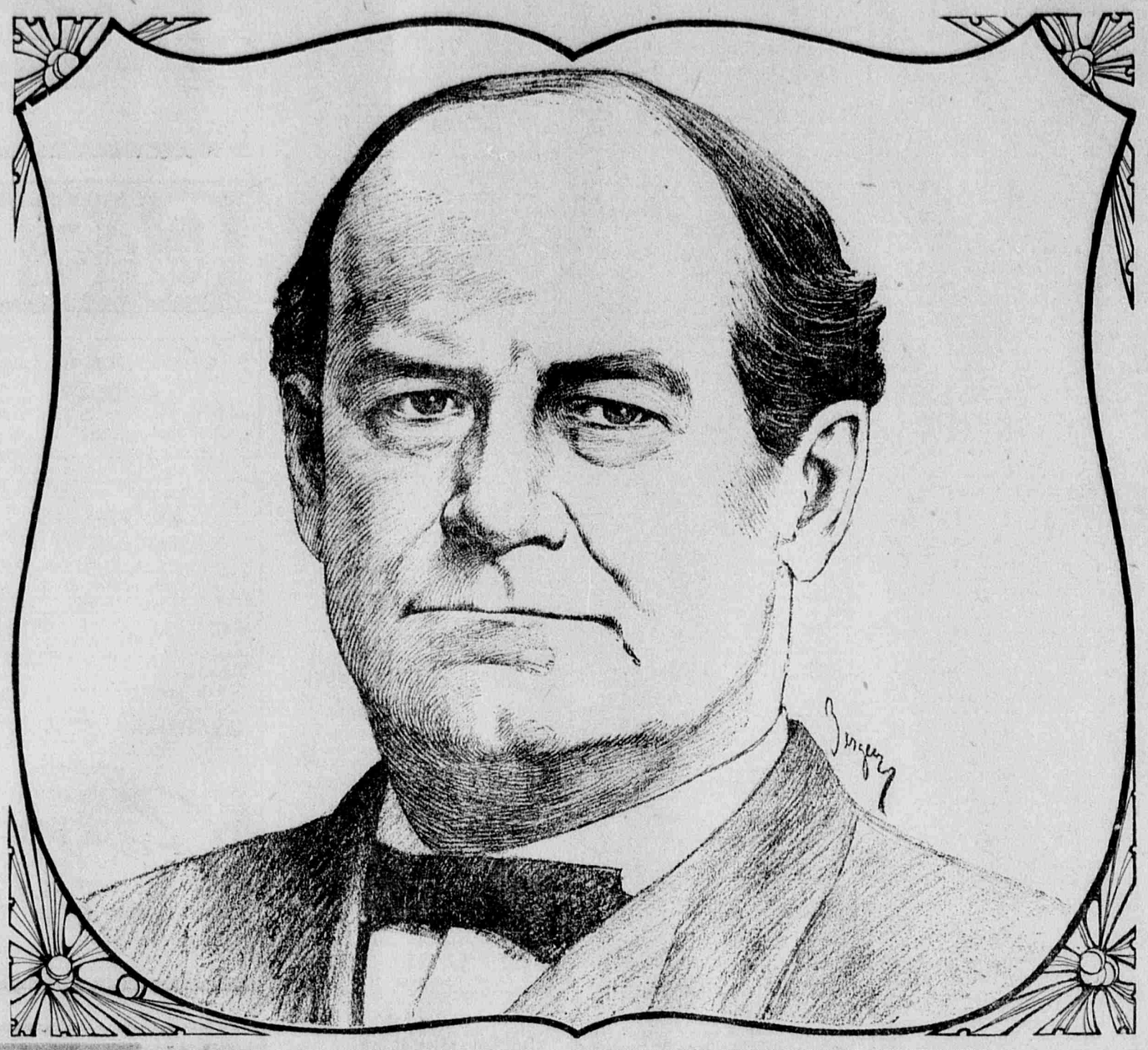
Four years later Mr. Bryan did not seek the nomination. He made no secret of his intention to permit the disaffected wing of his party to make the ticket. He appeared at the convention as a delegate and had something to say as to the platform, but he was not active in the selection of the ticket.

And now, for the third time, this man who has preserved his fair reputation at all times and in all places is about to conduct a presidential campaign. Personal worth and personal endowment are potent indeed, but they are far from being everything that contributes to the making of an American president. If they were, with Bryan and Taft in the field, the problem would be a thousand times more difficult and the result would be even more problematical than it is.

C. B. SANDERSON.



WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN, DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION.

DIPLOMACY IN THE ORIENT.

"To illustrate the unsuitability of European procedure in oriental affairs I will cite an incident in recent political history in Turkey," says a diplomatist. "A certain Kurdish chief had acquired notorjety by his ruthless oppression of the Armenians in his district. The consuls continually complained of his misdeeds to the ambassadors in Constantinople, and these gentlemen in their turn addressed their complaints to the Ottoman government. At last the scandal became so great that the sultan realized that some satisfaction must be given.

"The chief had many friends in the palace, and an ingenious suggestion was made by which he should be saved and the ambassadors at the same time satisfied. The ambassadors were informed that, to give them complete satisfaction, not only should the Kurd be brought to justice, but he should be tried at Constantinople in the presence of the representatives of the embassies.

"The trial was held, and the hostile witnesses, for the most part Armenians, were encouraged to speak with a freedom which they would not have ventured in the provinces, and as a result they witnessed to the committal of every kind of possible and impossible atrocity, contradicted one another on what purported to be statements of fact and obliged a court proceeding on western principles to discredit all their evidence.

"The chief was acquitted. His friends had known how to protect him. The ambassadors' complaints were silenced. And yet without the intervention of western procedure he could and would, if it had pleased the government, have been justly executed in the provinces without any further trial than a recitation of well known facts."

The Twentieth Democratic National Convention; With Some Notes on Previous Nominating Bodies

ON Tuesday next, at Denver, the twentieth national convention of the Democratic party will be called to order in the big new Auditorium built especially for the occasion. This great building, which will seat an audience of 14,000 persons, is reputed to be the most admirable structure of its class in the country. Its acoustic properties are declared to be wonderfully perfect, and all its arrangement has been with reference to the comfort of those who must pass the four or more days of the convention beneath its roof.

It is understood that this particular national convention is to be unlike its nineteen predecessors. The Denver people have intimated as much, and all the preliminaries seem to confirm it. The inhabitants of the charming Colorado metropolis regard the occasion more in the light of a glad holiday than as a formal political function. National political conventions are something of a novelty west of the Mississippi river, Missouri having enjoyed a monopoly of them until now. As an evidence of the willingness of the citizens to make everybody happy it is announced that every resident will wear a button bearing the legend, "Ask Me," which may be construed into meaning an actual thirst to be of service to the visitor.

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We have become so accustomed to the quadrennial gatherings which select candidates for president and vice president and incidentally settle on the political theories to be advanced that it is not easy to realize that it has not always been so; that it was almost half a century after the putting forth of the Declaration of Independence before the first national party convention was held. In the early days of this republic candidates were selected by the caucus method. Both the method and the word, it seems, are Yankee inventions, the word caucus being derived from an Indian expression meaning a meeting of big chiefs. Although the date of the birth of this word is uncertain, it was in common use before the Revolution. An entry in the diary of John Adams bearing date Feb. 10, 1763, tells of caucuses held in a Boston attic at which various town officials were nominated before they were voted for in regular town meeting. It is interesting, though immaterial, to know that Mr. Adams' diary also bears record of the fact that at these meetings much flip and tobacco were consumed. The limited suffrage which existed in the colonies prior to the Revolution made the caucus a natural outcome, and the members of it were the legal voters of a community. After peace was established the practice was continued for the want of something better and was extended to the selection of state and national officers.

It is probable that the very first political convention ever called regularly for a stated purpose, with regularly elected delegates, met at Utica, N. Y., in September, 1824. That was within the lifetime of a number of voters now living, and if the statement is not correct let them come forward and correct it. At that Utica convention De Witt Clinton was nominated for governor of New York, with James Tallmadge for lieutenant governor, and they were elected. It was not a party convention, being a coalition movement.

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The Utica convention proved to be so satisfactory that the question of calling a national convention was discussed. After a good deal of eloquence had been employed pro and con the matter was dropped with the opinion that such a scheme was "entirely impracticable from the immense extent of our country and from the great expense necessarily incident to an attendance from the extreme parts of the United States." This conclusion does not seem unreasonable when it is remembered that at that time there was not a mile of railroad in operation in the land and that it would have taken weeks for delegates from some points to reach the convention town. It was the development of American transportation facilities that made political conventions possible.

It is now agreed that the first national political convention ever held in America was called by the Anti-Masonic party in 1830 at Philadelphia. That party was organized by political reformers who were opposed to the existing order of things and especially to what were known as "Jacksonian methods." It had a rapid growth and at one time assumed formidable proportions. No nomination was made at Philadelphia, but the convention adjourned to reassemble at Baltimore the following year. That time it nominated William Wirt of Maryland unanimously and with more enthusiasm than had ever been shown in an American gathering of any kind.

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The Democrats at first did not take kindly to the convention idea. They had become accustomed to the caucus method, and they had also become proficient in the use of it. The first of the great national parties to adopt the convention system was the National Republican, the precursor of the Whigs, which met in convention at Baltimore in the winter of 1831 and nominated Henry Clay. The first notification committee ever appointed was sent by that convention to give the "idol" the official news of his nomination.

Thirteen years afterward a Democratic convention held at Baltimore was the first to develop a "dark horse." It was also the first to have its proceedings reported by telegraph and to set the example of a stampede. When the convention was called to order it looked as if Martin Van Buren would have a walkover. So many states had instructed for him that a clear majority could be figured for him on the first ballot. There was nothing on the surface to indicate that the New York man need feel the slightest anxiety as to the result. Probably, however, he did not feel as safe as appearances would seem to justify. He knew that about a month before the meeting of the convention, after most of the delegates had been instructed for him, he had written and sent out a letter which might cause him abundant trouble. In that unfortunate letter he had declared flatly against the annexation of Texas. When the vote was taken the trouble became visible. The southern delegates would not obey their instructions. The Virginia delegates even held a meeting to rescind their obligations to vote for Mr. Van Buren. On the first ballot he obtained a majority of only twenty-six. Under the leadership of the gifted Calhoun, who for a quarter of a century had been a presidential possibility, the southern delegates withdrew their support from the New York man and after seven ballots had been taken it began to look like "anybody's fight." Calhoun managed to have the two-thirds rule adopted, with at least two-thirds of the northern contingent opposing.

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It was on the eighth ballot that the "dark horse" episode was sprung. Unkindest and most unexpected of all, it was New Hampshire that sprung it. It was revealed later that the sensation had been prepared before the convention, but at the time it came like a great shock. The Granite State cast its ballot for James K. Polk of Tennessee, who had not received a vote. When the ballot was counted Polk was found to have received forty-four votes. When this announcement was made cries of "Who is Polk?" came from all over the hall. Thereupon several friends of the Tennessee statesman felt it incumbent on them to answer the question in a flood of the most untamable oratory ever let loose in a convention hall. It is sufficient to state that one definition of the new candidate termed him "a pure, whole hogged Democrat."

Then the ninth ballot was begun. It went on unchanged until New York was reached. The delegation asked permission to withdraw for consultation, and when it returned the chairman announced that it was the wish of Mr. Van Buren that the vote should be given to Mr. Polk. At that there was intense excitement, and a general stampede to Polk followed. When the ballot was concluded it was found that the Tennessee man was the unanimous choice of the convention, and the news was sent out by telegraph. So it was that Polk was the first "dark horse." Another Democrat, Mr. Bryan at the convention of 1896, was the last.

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The convention which renominated Grover Cleveland in 1888 at Chicago was one of the most single minded and harmonious Democratic nominating meetings ever held. There was apparently no question of Mr. Cleveland's renomination, and William C. Whitney, who was in charge of the Cleveland canvass, found that he had practically nothing to do. When he reached Chicago he declared to a friend: "Why, I can't keep the votes back! They tumble in at the windows as well as at the doors." From the beginning it was evident that everything was going the Cleveland way. The committee on resolutions brought in a tariff plank that was so shifty and ambiguous that it was received with laughter and cries of derision as it was being read. By a great majority the plank was stricken out and a new one inserted, one that was decided enough to meet the views of Mr. Cleveland, radical though they were.

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Next to General Bragg's memorable words spoken in seconding the nomination—"We love him for the enemies he has made"—the effort of Tammany's silver tongued orator, Bourke Cockran, to prevent the favorite's renomination were most entertaining. Cockran began a dramatic appeal for harmony, declaring that it would never come were the big president renominated. "I feel for him a personal friendship," he declared. "I oppose him in this convention only because he stands between the Democratic party and the light of victory. I believe Mr. Cleveland is a popular man" (applause), he continued—"a most popular man (increased applause)—a man of the most extraordinary popularity" (here he paused while the applause continued for three minutes)—"on every day in the year except election day!"

But the fluent Irishman's eloquence was of no avail. On the first ballot Cleveland polled 617 votes, ten more than the necessary two-thirds.

ELLIS STEPHENSON.

THE NEW AUDITORIUM AT DENVER.

TOLD AND RETOLD.

Water in coal mines is usually more or less acid, and when it comes in contact with electric lines it forms salts of copper. These salts rapidly disintegrate the copper wire unless they are carefully protected.

People who reside in the vicinity of Vesuvius have put to practical use the lava which has flowed from the volcano in past and recent eruptions. Naples and its suburbs appear to be a world of lava. The streets are paved with it. There are lava staircases and statues, drinking troughs, bric-a-brac and even jewelry.

There is in the field a motor power scheme greater even than that of Niagara or the Zambezi. A syndicate has been formed in England and America, it is said, with a capital of $20,000,000, to utilize the falls of the Uruguay river for motor force to provide light and power throughout Uruguay and the Argentine.

Leroyol, the French engineer, reports the discovery of a tribe of Indians in Guerrero, Mexico—over 400 of them—petrified in a natural cave extending fifteen miles underground.

Diabolo bids fair to become a nuisance. It is prohibited in parts of Berlin, and Switzerland is following suit. To play the game in any of the streets has for some time been a punishable offense at Lausanne; it has just been made so at Vevey, and people are said now to be clamoring for its total suppression at Geneva.

A man who was knocked down by a hansom cab in Islington, England, had the stump of his wooden leg broken, and a large number of silver and copper coins dropped out of the limb.

A submerged city of great antiquity has been discovered by sponge fishers who went down in a diving bell at Siax, off the coast of Tunis. It is believed that the land on which the city was built subsided.

Doctors in Sweden never send bills to their patients. They cheerfully accept whatever sum the patients choose to give them.

It was formerly held that there was no air above sixty miles, but astronomers observe that meteors, which are bright only when traveling through our atmosphere, are sometimes apparently as high above our heads as 500 miles.

An extraordinarily large number of dwarfs live in the district of Riwas, in the eastern Pyrenees. Tradition has it that they are the descendants of a race which inhabited those mountain ranges in prehistoric times.

A bullfight was about to take place in Valladolid, Spain, when two of the animals escaped from the arena and made their way into a hospital. Here they nimbly pranced around and upset several beds on which patients were lying and gored three persons.

The first hatmakers who plied their trade in England were Spaniards, who came over in 1510.

In the five Westminster public libraries, London, there are 114,984 volumes. The annual stock taking has revealed the fact that out of this total only two are missing.